



## THIS WEEK IN AGRICULTURE

*News briefs from and about Idaho's agricultural industry*

**March 13-20, 2005**

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### NOW IS THE TIME TO VACCINATE AGAINST WEST NILE VIRUS

BOISE, Idaho – In an effort to encourage preventative measures, the Idaho State Department of Agriculture (ISDA) is reminding horse owners to vaccinate their animals against West Nile Virus (WNV).

WNV is a devastating threat to horses coast-to-coast with a death rate of more than 30 percent for those that become infected with the disease. According to the USDA, there were approximately 15,000 cases of WNV in horses in 2002 and 4,636 cases in 2003.

Since the virus is transmitted by mosquitoes, it is wise to prepare early for the mosquito season. "Horse owners who have not already done so should contact their veterinarian to have their horses vaccinated," stated Dr. Marilyn Simunich, a veterinarian with the Idaho State Department of Agriculture. In 2004, equine case numbers were decreased further even as the disease spread into the western states. This decrease in deaths is possibly due to increased vaccination of horses.

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Approximately one-third of those horses contracting the disease would have died or had to be euthanized. The most common sign of WNV in horses is weakness, usually in the hindquarters. Weakness may be indicated by a widened stance, stumbling, leaning to one side and toe dragging.

The equine vaccine requires two doses and takes at least 2 weeks after the second dose to offer protection from the disease. This means the series should be started at least 5 weeks before the mosquito season. If vaccinated last year, a horse will most likely only require a booster shot this spring for protection during the 2005 mosquito season.

*For more information contact Dr. Marilyn Simunich (208) 322-8540*

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### **IDAHO WHEAT COMMISSION MEETING NOTICE**

BOISE, Idaho – Idaho Wheat Commission (IWC) Chairman Joe Anderson has called a meeting of the IWC to be held Thursday, March 17 beginning at 10:00 a.m. and Friday, March 18 at 8:00 a.m. in the IWC conference room, 821 W. State Street, Boise, Idaho.

The meeting will include a review of IWC financial statements, preliminary FY06 budget proposals, research projects and information & education updates and consideration of various market development requests from the agricultural community.

The public is welcome to attend. If hearing impaired or handicapped, assistance will be provided upon request.

*For additional information call Tereasa Sinigiani (208) 334-2353.*

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### **ISDA GEARS UP FOR 2005 CAMPAIGN AGAINST MORMON CRICKET INFESTATIONS**

BOISE, Idaho – The 2005 campaign against Mormon cricket and grasshopper infestations began in earnest this week and the first two battlegrounds appear to be in Elmore and Owyhee Counties. Last year, an unusually warm spring resulted in Mormon crickets hatching 30 to 40 days earlier than normal. A similar pattern appears to be on tap for 2005 with the reports this week, of first stage cricket nymphs emerging from egg beds at sites in both counties.

Division of Plant Industries field staff observed and treated several small cricket hatches near Mayfield hitting small nymphs early before they have a chance to form large crop destroying bands. Last year southern Idaho witnessed a population explosion of Mormon crickets that ate their way across Idaho rangeland, cropland and gardens. Based on forecast surveys conducted last season, a mild winter and current drought conditions, 2005 threatens to break even more records of pest levels as well as number of impacted landowners.

Mormon crickets and grasshoppers continue to be one of the more serious pest problems on Idaho rangelands and adjacent croplands.

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In response, ISDA in cooperation with USDA, Animal Health Inspection Service (APHIS) is gearing up to help ranchers and farmers treat economic infestations on impacted federal, state and private lands.

Although the ISDA and USDA maintain close cooperation, there will be a division of responsibilities throughout the suppression campaign.

APHIS conducts statewide population surveys and will control grasshopper and cricket populations strictly on federal lands. These sites are primarily BLM administered lands in close proximity to private rangeland or cropland. ISDA will compliment the federal efforts by managing infestations on state-owned lands and helping landowners protect private rangeland and cropland.

The ISDA Grasshopper and Mormon Cricket Control Program in 2005 will have a two-pronged approach to insect suppression. For larger scale infestations, ranchers are encouraged to organize aerial control projects and request cost assistance from ISDA. In addition, ISDA will continue to provide insecticide bait to landowners to treat damaging bands of crickets or grasshoppers by ground application. The ISDA goal is to help impacted landowners protect their grazing resource or cropland while encouraging the judicious use of grasshopper insecticides. Both ISDA and APHIS strive to avoid any negative impacts to pollinators, non target species and sensitive environments.

This season the cooperating agencies will establish two Grasshopper/Mormon Cricket Suppression Program hotlines to respond to landowner requests for assistance.

In southwest Idaho (Ada, Adams, Boise, Canyon, Elmore, Gem, Gooding, Owyhee, Payette and Washington counties) impacted landowners should use the Boise hotline 208-685-6977.

In southeast Idaho (Bannock, Bear Lake, Bingham, Blaine, Bonneville, Camas, Caribou, Cassia, Franklin, Jerome, Lincoln, Minidoka, Oneida and Twin Falls counties) landowners should use the Twin Falls hotline 208-733-5119.

*For more information contact Les Tschole or Dick Lawson at 208-332-8536*

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## **BILL WOULD LIMIT FURTHER EXPANSION OF FEDERAL CONTROL IN THE WEST**

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Idaho Congressmen Mike Simpson and C.L. "Butch" Otter became original cosponsors on Thursday of new legislation to keep the federal government from expanding its land holdings in the West at the expense of taxpayers and the services that local citizens need.

The No Net Loss of Private Lands Act would require that any acquisition of more than 100 acres of new federal lands in the West - states with 25 percent or more of their lands already under federal control - be offset by a corresponding sale of existing holdings of equal or greater value. The idea is to stop the expansion of the federal government's vast holdings in the West and begin the process of selling those valuable parcels back to the public.

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The federal government owns almost 52 percent of the land in 13 Western states, including more than 63 percent in Idaho. The other 37 states are only 4.1-percent federally owned. While the federal government promised in the enabling acts for states in the West to sell a portion of the federal lands to pay for state projects, the government instead has increased its holdings. It now spends almost \$200 million a year to acquire new land.

Besides checking the expansion of federal control in the West, the new legislation would require the government to consider the impacts of its acquisitions and to begin returning current holdings to private, taxpaying owners.

"My role as vice-chairman of the House Interior Appropriations Subcommittee has reinforced my belief that the federal government already owns more land than it needs or can possibly take care of," Congressman Simpson said. "The federal government year in and year out fails to meet its responsibilities to manage the land it currently owns or adequately compensate rural counties with large federal land ownership. The federal government cannot continue to place increased burdens on rural communities by displacing lands that are so important to the tax base of these small communities."

"The federal government has failed in its commitment to the people of the rural West by refusing to make up financially for the land it controls. If local folks are paying for search-and-rescue, waste disposal and court costs for those who come to play on federal lands, the least the feds can do is start offsetting those expenses by returning some of that property to the local tax rolls," Congressman Otter said. "If it really is in the best interest of the general public for more land to be added to the federal inventory, then I believe a similar amount of land should be removed from federal management. This bill accomplishes that goal."

*For more Information Contact Mark Warbis at (208) 336-9831 or Nikki Watts (208) 336-9831*

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### **NEW PUBLICATION HELPS PACIFIC NORTHWEST HARD WHEAT GROWERS DELIVER PREMIUM-EARNING PROTEIN LEVELS**

CALDWELL, Idaho - With short water supplies looming over many farmers' fields this year, planting small grain crops that mature earlier and use less water is particularly tempting, says Brad Brown, University of Idaho Extension crop management specialist at Parma. Among those spring-planted small grain crops, hard reds or hard whites may be the best option for some growers, he says, because hard wheat prices are typically stronger than soft wheat prices and because market premiums for higher proteins in hard wheats can help offset reduced returns if drought shrinks yields.

Since 1982, hard red spring wheat with 14 percent protein levels has brought an average \$47 an acre more in gross returns than soft white spring wheat. Hard red winter wheat whose proteins have reached 12 percent has returned an average \$12 more per acre than soft white winter wheat.

The rub is that Pacific Northwest hard wheats don't consistently reach protein levels that the marketplace will reward. Economic penalties for falling short can be up to three times the premiums, and managing nitrogen for both high yields and high proteins has proven especially frustrating in the region's high rainfall and irrigated systems.

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A new 16-page publication by soil scientists from four Pacific Northwest land-grant universities will help growers minimize the uncertainties associated with producing high-protein hard wheats. By providing growers with a better understanding of the principles of wheat nitrogen utilization, the relationships of protein to yield and available nitrogen, and nitrogen management for hard wheat, the publication should enable them to more consistently produce high yields of hard wheat with acceptable protein, the authors say.

"Growers who couldn't plant soft white winter wheat last fall because of wet conditions and who are planting hard red spring wheats for the first time this year may find the publication especially useful", says Brown, its lead author.

Entitled "Nitrogen Management for Hard Wheat Protein Enhancement" the new publication includes the results of recent research conducted in the Pacific Northwest. Although its focus is on irrigated wheat, many of the principles it outlines apply to rainfed wheat as well.

In addition to Brown, its authors include Mal Westcott of Montana State University, Neil Christensen of Oregon State University, Bill Pan of Washington State University and Jeff Stark of the University of Idaho.

The publication can be downloaded from [www.info.ag.uidaho.edu](http://www.info.ag.uidaho.edu). Click on Catalog, CALS Publishing Catalog, then New Releases in 2005. To order it by phone, call (208) 885-7982.

*For more information contact Marlene Fritz at (208) 384-0649 or [mfritz@uidaho.edu](mailto:mfritz@uidaho.edu) in Boise.*

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#### **JOHANNIS ANNOUNCES SIGN-UP FOR LIVESTOCK ASSISTANCE PROGRAM AND AMERICAN INDIAN LIVESTOCK FEED PROGRAM**

WASHINGTON, March 11, 2005- Agriculture Secretary Mike Johannis today announced that eligible producers may sign up at their local USDA Service Center beginning March 14 for USDA's Livestock Assistance Program (LAP) and American Indian Livestock Feed Program (AILFP).

"We are pleased to be able to provide these benefits to producers as quickly as possible," Johannis said. "Natural disasters are unpredictable weather events that put farmers and ranchers at risk, as they work to produce a dependable and affordable national food supply."

These programs will provide relief to livestock producers who have suffered grazing losses in 2003 and 2004 due to drought, severe weather and related causes, and have limited safety net and risk management tools available.

To speed up the process, producers may sign up for these programs online from their home or business beginning in April or at any USDA Service Center across the nation. To sign up online, producers must first establish an e-authentication identity in their local USDA Service Center. Currently, producers also may sign up online for USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) Loan Deficiency Payment Program and the Direct and Counter-cyclical Payment Program.

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The LAP and the AILFP programs were authorized by The Military Construction and Appropriations and Emergency Hurricane Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2005 (2005 Act), to provide disaster assistance for producers who suffered losses in 2003 or 2004. LAP and AILFP share many of the same eligibility characteristics, such as:

A producer's grazing land (LAP) or the tribal governed land (AILFP) must be located in a county designated as a primary disaster county under a Presidential or Secretarial disaster declaration. The county must have been approved as a primary disaster county on or after Jan. 1, 2003, for a disaster occurring through Dec. 31, 2004. Assistance will not be available in contiguous counties.

A county may meet eligibility requirements for both 2003 and 2004; however, a producer in that county may receive benefits for only one of those calendar years.

Producers may receive benefits under both LAP and AILFP for the same year.

The 2005 Act provides that producers who reduced the number of livestock because of a natural disaster shall not be penalized for those reductions. If, because of a natural disaster, a producer sold eligible livestock that were placed on grazing land (LAP) or tribal governed land (AILFP) on or after Jan. 31, 2003, the producers will receive compensation for the entire disaster payment period. Benefits will be based on the number of livestock the producer would have owned if the disaster had not occurred. For livestock that were sold in the course of routine business, producers will receive benefits for those animals only up to the date of sale.

Producers of dairy and beef cattle; bison and beefalo; goats; swine; sheep; and certain equine, elk and reindeer are now eligible to participate in both programs.

Provisions of specific eligibility for each program are as follows:

#### Livestock Assistance Program

The LAP is a grazing loss program that will pay eligible livestock producers for grazing losses on a per head basis of eligible livestock. A producer must have control of adequate grazing land to support the eligible livestock and the producer must possess beneficial interest in eligible livestock that have been owned or leased for at least three months. During 2003 or 2004, a livestock producer must have suffered a 40 percent or greater loss of grazing production for three or more consecutive months due to natural disasters.

The 2005 Act also imposes a requirement that limits assistance to persons with a gross revenue limit of \$2.5 million, which is a change from the previous LAP. A \$40,000 per person payment limitation also applies to LAP assistance.

#### American Indian Livestock Assistance Program

AILFP will provide reimbursement of expenses for purchases of livestock feed for producers whose livestock were on tribal-governed land at the time of a natural disaster. Payments are made directly to the livestock owners and based on the smaller of either 30 percent of basic feed needs, stated as the Animal Unit Day (AUD) for eligible livestock, or the actual dollar amount of livestock feed purchases recorded on receipts.

As in the past, tribal governments will request to enter into a government-to-government contract for areas meeting the loss criteria.

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In addition to meeting other loss criteria, the tribal governed land must have had a loss of grazing production in excess of 35 percent. Livestock owners will receive benefits for the actual number of livestock that were present on tribal-governed land during the disaster payment period in which supplemental feed was provided.

USDA's Web site, <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/egov/> provides producers with one convenient location for details on new and existing disaster assistance.

*For More Information Contact Ed Loyd (202) 720-4623 Stevin Westcott (202) 720-4178*

### **ISDA MARKETING MONTH AT A GLANCE**

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<b>March 13-16</b>	Trade Mission to Mexico
<b>March 16-18</b>	Food & Hotel Korea Trade Show
<b>March 21-26</b>	Chipping Potato Seminar and Mission

Editor's Note: Please forward by 10:00 a.m. Thursday any press releases or information to [rmason@idahoag.us](mailto:rmason@idahoag.us).